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ABSTRACT

This investigation sought to replicate a previous study (Greendorfer and Lewko, 1978) on children's socialization into sport. It was hypothesized that family members, specifically fathers, were the most significant predictors of male and female sport participation, followed by the peer group and teachers, respectively. A Sport Interest Inventory was administered to 288 fourth- through sixth-graders to determine the influence of significant others (father, mother, brothers, sisters, peers, teachers, and coaches) on their level of sport participation. Findings from stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that peers and fathers, respectively, were significant predictors for both males and females. This study report discusses the implications of these findings, which are in contrast with previous literature suggesting that the family is the primary agency of sport participation. (Author/CB)

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CHILDREN'S SOCIALIZATION INTO SPORT: A REPLICATION.

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Previous research concerned with the sport socialization process clearly documents the existence of gender differences, beginning at a very early age (Greendorfer, 1983; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1973). The literature suggests that these differences may be related to gender role appropriate notions that parents inadvertently introduce into childhood socialization, particularly with respect to play, games and sport. However, parents are not the only agents of sport socialization. Siblings, peers, teachers and coaches also influence the process (Greendorfer & Lewko, 1978; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982). Despite the research interest in the sport socialization process during the 1970's, findings are contradictory and there has been little interest in replication. Therefore, the primary purpose of this investigation was to replicate the study of Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) on children's socialization into sport. In light of previous findings, it was hypothesized that family members, more specifically fathers, were the most significant predictors of male and female sport participation, followed by the peer group and teachers, respectively. A Sport Interest Inventory, validated by Greendorfer and Lewko (1978), was administered to 288 (146 males and 142 females) fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students between the ages of 9 and 12 years to determine the influence of significant others (father, mother, brothers, sisters, peers, teachers and coaches) on their level of sport participation. Findings from stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that peers and fathers, respectively, were significant predictors for both male $F(2,144) = 19.79$, $p < .001$, explaining 22% of the variance, and females $F(2,141) = 50.26$, $p < .001$, explaining 42% of the variance. These findings are in contrast with previous literature that suggests the family is the primary agency of sport socialization. Discussion focuses on the implications of these findings.

The process of socialization into sport has been an area of research focusing primarily on the elite athlete and adults (Kenyon & McPherson, 1973), however, a few studies have focused on young adults (Greendorfer, 1977; Weiss & Knoppers, 1982) and childrens' socialization into sport (Greedorfer, 1977; Greendorfer & Lewko, 1978; Lewko & Ewing, 1980). Much of the research regarding socialization into sport has been based upon a social learning paradigm. This paradigm identifies three factors: personal attributes, socializing agents, and social institutions, which impact upon social learning and influence the socialization into sport process. Most of this research has centered on the influence of socializing agents (significant others) and socializing institutions (schools), with primary interest on the significant others factor.

Of the various socializing agents, family members have been one of the strongest agents influencing male and female socialization into sport (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1973; Goodman & Lever, 1974; Rheingold & Cook, 1975; Greendorfer, 1977; Greendorfer & Lewko, 1978; Lewko & Ewing, 1980). Greendorfer (1977), utilizing Kenyon & McPherson's (1973) social learning paradigm, investigated the role of socializing agents in the socialization process of collegiate women. The results indicated that family and peers were the most important socializing agents during childhood, while in adolescence, peers, teachers and coaches were important.

In an effort to confirm the findings of the Greendorfer (1977) study, Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) focused attention exclusively on childhood sport socialization. Children ages 8 to 13 years, were given the Sport Interest Inventory which was developed to identify the influence of the family members, peers and teachers on the sport involvement of boys and girls. The three social systems (family, peers, and teachers) were compared relative to their influence on the sport participation of boys and girls; the results indicating that peers were the significant socializing agent for boys. A similar comparison for the girls revealed that none of the three social systems were significant predictors of girls' sport involvement. As a result of the initial analysis, a comparison between siblings and parental influence was completed. For both boys and girls, parents were significant socializing influences, while siblings were found not to be significant predictors of sport involvement. A third analysis of individual family members was completed to better understand the influence each family member had on the boys' and girls' sport involvement. The analysis revealed that the fathers were the only significant predictor of sport participation for both boys and girls. An additional regression analysis compared fathers (most important socializing agent in the family), peers and teachers and their influence on boys' and girls' sport involvement. Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) noted that all three social systems were significant indicators, with the father's influence being greatest for boy's sport involvement. The father was shown to be the significant predictor of the girls' sport involvement, whereas peers and teachers were not significant influencing agents.

The present investigation was conducted as a partial replication of the Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) study, to further the knowledge base regarding the socialization of children into sport. In light of the Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) findings, it was hypothesized that peers were significant predictors of male sport involvement, while none of the social systems (family, peers, teachers) were significant predictors of female sport involvement.

Subjects for this study were 146 males and 142 females, 9 to 12 years of age. The Sport Interest Inventory, validated by Greendorfer and Lewko (1978), was administered to the subjects to determine their level of sport involvement as well as the influence of significant others (father, mother, brothers, sisters, peers, teachers) on subjects' sport participation. The responses to each question were scaled 1 to 5, with the high scores indicating greater sport involvement and influence. Five questions were combined to form the dependent variable, active sport involvement. Stepwise multiple regression analysis were used to determine the influence socializing agents had on boys' and girls' sport involvement.

Stepwise multiple regression analysis were utilized with sport involvement as the dependent variable and father, mother, sister, brother, teachers and peers as the independent variables. The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that peers accounted for 16% of the variance and were significant predictors of boys' sport involvement, $F(1,145) = 26.62$, $p < .001$. Fathers were also significant predictors of sport involvement, $F(2,144) = 19.79$, $p < .001$, accounting for 6% of the variance. Mothers, sisters, brothers and teachers did not significantly contribute to the regression equation (Table 1). When family was entered into a stepwise regression analysis as a combined variable (fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers), along with peers and teachers, peers and family were significant predictors of boys' sport involvement, $F(2,143) = 16.78$, $p < .001$ (Table 2).

For girls' sport involvement, the regression analysis revealed that peers accounted for 39% of the variance and were significant predictors, $F(1,141) = 88.60$, $p < .001$. Fathers approached significance as a predictor of girls' sport participation, $F(2,140) = 50.26$, $p < .001$, but accounted for only 3% of the variance. Mothers, sisters, brothers and teachers did not significantly contribute to the regression equation (Table 3). When family was entered into a stepwise regression analysis as a combined variable along with peers and teachers, peers were significant predictors of girls' sport involvement, $F(1,140) = 80.48$, $p < .001$ (Table 4).

TABLE 1

Influence of Family Members, Peers and Teachers on Boys' Sport Involvement

			Regression statistic	
Variables	Multiple R	R^2	B	F
Peers	.393	.155	.300***	26.62***
Father	.464	.215	.272**	19.79***
Sister	.482	.232	.131	14.48***
Teachers	.488	.238	.101	11.14***
Mother	.496	.246	-.110	9.20***
Brother	.496	.246	.012	7.62***

** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

TABLE 2

Influence of Family, Peers and Teachers on
Boys' Sport Involvement

			Regression statistic	
Variables	Multiple R	R^2	B	F
Peers	.387	.150	.289***	25.42***
Family	.436	.190	.186*	16.78***
Teachers	.450	.202	.119	11.99***

* $p < .05$
*** $p < .001$

TABLE 3

Influence of Family Members, Peers and Teachers on Girls' Sport Involvement

			Regression statistic	
Variables	Multiple R	R^2	B	F
Peers	.621	.385	.533***	88.60***
Father	.646	.417	.172[a]	50.26***
Mother	.647	.419	.052	33.48***
Brother	.648	.420	-.036	24.99***
Sister	.648	.420	.021	19.88***
Teachers	.648	.420	-.011	16.45***

*** $p < .001$

[a]Approached signifigance ($p < .06$)

TABLE 4

Influence of Family, Peers and Teachers on
Girls' Sport Involvement

			Regression statistic	
Variables	Multiple R	R^2	B	F
Peers	.622	.387	.547***	85.48***
Family	.631	.399	.115	46.09***
Teachers	.633	.400	.050	30.77***

*** $p < .001$

The purpose of the present investigation was to partially replicate the work of Greendorfer and Lewko (1978). The results of the Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) study revealed that for boys, peers were the only significant socializing agents, when family, peers, and teachers were entered into the analysis. For the girls, none of the socializing systems were seen as significant predictors of female sport involvement. In the present investigation, the results revealed that peers and family, respectively, were significant indicators of sport involvement for boys and peers were significant indicators of sport involvement for girls. These findings partially support the Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) study and thus partially support the present research hypothesis. The results of the present study indicate that when the family is divided into separate units (father, mother, sisters, brothers), the father's influence emerges as significant for both boys and girls.

Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) reported that when the comparison was made between fathers, peers and teachers, all three groups were significant predictors of boys' sport involvement, with the father's influence being the greatest. The same comparison for the girls revealed that fathers and peers, respectively, were significant influences, but teachers were not. The present investigation noted that even though fathers were a significant influence for both boys and girls, the peer group accounted for more of the statistical variance and were a greater influence on sport involvement.

With the exception of the socialization into sport research by Greendorfer (1977), the present investigation is the only study showing that peers account for a greater percent of the variance in childhood sport involvement than parents. It must be noted that Greendorfer (1977) used collegiate female subjects in a retrospective design, whereas the present investigation used children. One possible explanation for the discrepancy in findings is related to the ten year time span between the Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) study and the present investigation. During this time it has become more socially acceptable for both boys and girls to participate in sport. In addition, it is possible that social class and ethnic background differences could account for the differing results. The results from the present investigation suggest a need for further research in the area of socialization into sport. Future investigations should include data related to ethnic background and social class which may play mediating roles in the socialization process for boys and girls into sport.